

Chapter IX

GUIDES FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF CHANGES

The government of Thailand provides in Bangkok and in other centers of the country up-to-date facilities for training in modern midwifery. It has also created in some places special opportunities for the traditional midwives to upgrade their skills. One of the objectives of the Minburi Health Center was to carry on a certain amount of instruction in modern views. For reasons that have been explained, no one in Bang Chan ever had or even sought modern instruction. The midwives of whom we have spoken grew up entirely in the folk tradition.

On the basis of the material presented at length in the previous pages, a few suggestions are here advanced which may be of help to these public programs in maternal and child health.

1. Build a program around the idea that it will help women in their age-old role of caring for, raising, and nourishing (liang) children. Emphasize that through new techniques they may increase their strength and care better for themselves and the babies.

2. Change existing practices as little as possible.

3. When a change is offered, ask that the midwife, mother, or whoever observed it watch for certain results which allow them to judge it in relation to the old. The idea is strong that aspects of the natural world can be analyzed and considered pragmatically, then legitimately utilized as a basis for modifying customary behavior.

4. Pay special attention to the places where the old and the new come into conflict and seek ways to resolve these conflicts.

As an example, let us consider these points in relation to cutting the umbilical cord. Modern instruction recommends the use of scissors--neat, sterilizable, handy--to avoid infection while cutting the cord. People in Bang Chan wish to avoid this infection, too, but for them scissors are unsatisfactory for several reasons: they are scarce, they rust--and

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